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THEATER:

# CONNORS May Be Stuck With This Fellow Kelly

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By HARRY MacARTHUR.  
Drama Critic of The Star

Michael Connors is right, he could be going into a good — and easy — year.

"I think things go in cycles," he was saying the other night while absorbing garlic in an assortment of specialties of the house at Vince Iorio's Vineyard restaurant. "I was in one of the bad ones last year. I had two automobile accidents, which I don't normally do every year. And you can see this." He displayed a taped left wrist.

"I was making a TV pilot for a show called 'Mannix,'" he went on. "I've made lots of action movies and a TV series called 'Tightrope' without a scratch.

"So I'm making this pilot and doing a scene in which I'm fighting with a stunt man and punching him in the back. He's wearing a steel plate lined with foam rubber to protect his kidneys because you can really get hurt when hit there.

"Ordinarily in a scene like that you swing and stop your fist right at the point of contact and it looks like the real thing. This time my timing was just a little off and I didn't stop in time. His kidneys are in fine shape, but I have a broken bone in my wrist."

The release of a movie titled "Kiss the Girls and Make Them Die" (it opened on Friday at Loew's Palace) should switch the trend and start Connors on a new cycle. It could even have him on the threshold of a brand new phase of his acting career.

"Kiss the Girls" is another spoof of the James Bond type of films, full of girls, mayhem and some pretty wild comedy. It is not "just another" one, though. Directed by Henry Levin with imagination and a certain wild abandon, and played the same way by Connors, Terry-Thomas and Dorothy Provine, it is sheer entertainment. Audiences are certain to have fun with it.

Connors plays a CIA agent named Kelly, embroiled in a battle to keep a madman from losing his ray that will kill the sex urge of anybody exposed to it. He plays it deftly, too.

## He Looks Sturdy

A former athlete (basketball at UCLA) Connors appears sturdy enough to perform some of the wild feats spy spoofers are called on to do. A rugged type, it is no surprise when toothsome girls in bikinis keep leaning in his direction. He also can toss off a deadpan comedy line with good effect.

There is no discernible reason why Connors and Kelly shouldn't become as close as Connery and Bond or Caine and Palmer. This character could keep him busy for years.

Despite the abundance of them in the past year it's not likely that these burlesques of spy movies will suddenly go out of style. It is more likely that they will fall into a niche, alongside of westerns. The well-made ones will always bring in the customers.

The possibility that writers and directors will run out of wild gadgets and gimmicks is not something to worry anyone. That old line about there being nothing new under the sun still holds.

## Helicopters Are Big

Helicopters, for instance, are very big in spy film spoofs. Frequently they are employed in chases and running gun battles between the man in the helicopter and the man in an automobile below.

New? Have a look at the adjacent illustration from C. W. Ceram's handsome "Archaeology of the Cinema" (Harcourt, Brace & World). If you look closely you will see that the man in the touring car is firing at the man in the aeroplane, who is firing right

back at him. The date was approximately 1900.

Even if Kelly doesn't become a perennial Connors character and "Mannix" doesn't get a sponsor, he seems a type who will survive. He might even go into politics. He didn't say as much, but he did have a revealing comment to make about the question of whether or not film stars should be active politically.

"Movie actors," he said, "have long periods of working hard and then long periods of idleness. So they read a lot. There are many actors who are better informed about what's going on in the world than a lot of people who don't have that kind of time for reading and study."

Connors, a native Californian born in Fresno, followed



Michael Connors plays a CIA agent in "Kiss the Girls and Make Them Die" at Loew's Palace.

high school with three years in the Air Force in World War II. After that he went to U.C.L.A., majoring in basketball, he says, then went on to law school, but not for long. He doesn't regret that, either.

"I'm glad I didn't finish and become a lawyer," he says. "I have several friends who did. They are with good law firms, making good money, have nice homes and families — and they're bored.

"There's nothing boring about being an actor in these days of global movie-making."

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